

27th Sunday
10/7/2012

RESTORING ORIGINAL UNITY

From the beginning, before the fall, before Original sin there were three other originals.

Original Solitude. The man, the human person, was alone, naming the animals but without a suitable partner. The first chapter of Genesis describes creation as good and very good, but now we're told that this original solitude is *not* good.

Original Joy. When Adam meets Eve there's the first, the original expression of human joy. Adam finds one who is like him but who at the same time is different. The loneliness of solitude is replaced by the joy of companionship.

Original Unity is what flows from this as two become one. It reveals an equality that allowed for intimacy. This shows forth a communion of persons in harmony with each other. It's been said that marriage is of divine, not human origin. But unfortunately, that unity would not last.

Original Sin, the disobedience of Adam and Eve did not destroy but terribly impaired this unity, Adam and Eve turned on each other becoming matter of "The Blame Game."

In the gospel we jump ahead to Jesus' day, a trap of sorts is set. There were two schools of Jewish thought about divorce. One was that a man could divorce his wife for a serious reason and that he could do so for any reason. The rights the wife at that time were between slim and none. It's as if the Pharisees are asking Jesus, "Are you liberal or conservative, blue or red?" When Jesus asks them about the law, they go back to Moses the Lawgiver.

In his response, Jesus doesn't go back to Moses but to the start of humanity. He goes back to, *From the beginning*. That is his point of reference, from creation, from the original lawgiver. His position isn't liberal or conservative, it's radical, literally—it goes back to the roots of humanity. Jesus forbids what the law, both

Jewish and pagan, allows. Jesus seeks to restore marriage to its original beauty, to the Original Unity that existed before Original Sin.

Implicit in Jesus' words and that of Genesis is an equality between man and woman that says a woman, and for that matter a man, cannot be considered a throwaway object. They share the same nature, the same dignity and in marriage become indivisibly one. Jesus reveals a vision of marriage that is both beautiful and challenging.

The Catholic vision sees marriage as a sacrament. It is something sacred that bestows the grace of God upon those who receive it so they can live out this noble and challenging vocation *and* it sheds light on the mystery of God's love. God is love. God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a communion of life and love and marriage is to be a communion of life of love that in some way reflects the very life of God.

This is a mystery with its own contours and dimensions that by its very nature require one man and one woman who enter into a communion of life and love that is to be faithful, permanent and open to life.

Jesus goes on to speak about the permanence of marriage and his words are strong. These strong words can be comforting to some, challenging to others and make no mistake, they can be very painful to others. And yet Jesus doesn't speak to hurt but to help. Jesus' vision of marriage was different from his contemporary culture, both Jewish and Roman and it continues to differ from contemporary culture today.

We all have family and friends who have known the heartbreak of divorce and some of us have experienced it ourselves. Anyone who has known the pain of a divorce has experienced a pain that others can only imagine. As someone who has never been married I know the pain I feel when those I know divorce and that what I experience is only a small fraction of what they experience.

From this discussion on marriage we have the story of Jesus and the children. Marriage is to be the origin of new life. Life is to be the fruit of love. In the child, the love of husband and wife takes on a life of its own and their love for each other

walks upon the earth. Marriage is to be a place of hospitality to new life. Simply put, marriage is to be faithful, lifelong and life-giving

Marriage is a sacrament that seeks to restore the original unity that existed before the Original Sin. As we celebrate the Eucharist we renew our loving relationship with God. Jesus avoided a trap with the truth, a truth that goes back, *from the beginning*. Jesus offers a beautiful vision of life and of marriage rooted not in being liberal or conservative but rooted in truth. A vision that seeks to restore the original unity and original joy of marriage.

Holding to this vision can isolate us more and more from modern day culture. Even when we fall short and fail, Jesus desires to heal us and restore us to his joy. Jesus' heart is always for our happiness. We can struggle with the challenge of that vision but with lives of intentional faith, we also remain faithful to the beauty of that vision that reveals the love of God through Jesus, who is the truth of God, through Jesus who ultimately reveals that God is love.